

The Grief School

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Grief Specialists

Death and Dying Vs. Grief



Sharon ([00:02](#)):

Let's talk about death and dying versus grief, death and dying, long-term illness. Right? So you are sitting with someone at their bedside as they're, they're actively dying.

Erica ([00:14](#)):

<Affirmative>

Sharon ([00:15](#)):

That my friends, is an intellectual event. There are moments that you drop down into your heart and you're absolutely grieving. You're, you're fearful. And you know what? I, I don't even wanna say that I'm, I'm gonna use my re my personal experience with this, with Sharon and with daddy. I w there were, I didn't really go into my heart because I was all intellectual. I gotta talk to the nurse. I gotta talk to the doctor. Do I have the right hospital bed set up? Where am I putting the hospital bed? There was so much of that that came through my brain. And I even tried to, I remember Erica standing at daddy's bedside when he was dying and thinking, what is this gonna feel like? Like I closed my eyes and I tried to force my heart into the grieving experience. I did that. Okay, what is this gonna feel like? Because I knew what grief was, because we had lost Austin. I had lost T Carro. I knew deep grief and I tried to force my heart there. But you can't make it go there.

Erica ([01:17](#)):

Mm-Hmm. No. As much as you try to anticipate what it's gonna feel like, you really have no idea tell that person is absolutely gone, because he's still physically, he was still physically there every day. Even though we knew what was happening, we were still able to touch him. We were still able to talk to him. We were still able to there until he really transitioned. There was signs of life. So it's, he's still very much present in your heart, but when he took that last breath and was gone, it was like a game changer.

Sharon ([01:52](#)):

Oh yeah. So, oh, I recently heard, and what made me wanna do this show with you is that I recently heard a client tell us that she hired a deaf doula. What? I think deaf dos are amazing. They help you during that, that transition. They help you come up with what do you need to do? Where are we gonna put this? How are we gonna handle this? But she was told by the death doula that if she did everything right, according to their death, then when it was time to grieve, she would be okay. Because she would've handled everything that was so far from what my experience was. I absolutely called you right away and was like, does this even sound right? Because sometimes you and I question our grief as we're out here speaking at, okay, wait, did we do this right? Is this correct?

Erica ([02:40](#)):

<Laugh>

Sharon ([02:41](#)):

So everything that I did for my dad and everything that I did for Sharon, but now that I thi and we don't compare losses, but I, I was definitely much more emotional at the time that Sharon was sick and dying. Had nothing to do with my grief.

Erica ([02:58](#)):

You think you can prepare yourself, but you really can't. You, because there's no way to actively start grieving during the dying process. There's no, you know, you're, you're definitely grieving the fact that the person is sick. You know? And you know that the outcome is not gonna be good. That that is a level you always talk about. Grief has levels. That is a level to the grief. But it's definitely not the ultimate grief you're gonna feel when they're gone, because you miss 'em. You miss them. Our grief is our love, and we carry it in our hearts, and we don't have anywhere to put it. When daddy was lying on that bed and he was dying, we could still give him our love. We were loving through to his transition. But when he was gone, you know, we then, now we're stuck holding that love in our hearts. And we can't put it anywhere. You know, you love your family, you love your husband, you love your children. It's the different love than being someone's child.

Sharon ([03:59](#)):

So one of the things that you and I truly teach, and I'm, I wanna, I wanna go back to this, is that there are two types of grief. There's intellectual grief that goes on in our head, and there's emotional grief that happens in our heart. The grief that you and I work with is the emotional grief that the griever is feeling in their heart. I honestly believe from my experience, that I was completely in emotional grief. Hear me out on emotional grief. Also, friends, our brains are very smart. They are so smart that they perceive this grief as danger. It is perceived by your brain the exact same way. If you were out camping and a bear came into your campsite, what would your brain tell you? It would tell you, get the hell

Sharon ([04:43](#)):

Out of there as quickly as

Sharon ([04:45](#)):

Possible. You know, my advice is raise your hands up and say, go with there. Go with there. I dunno if that works. I did hear that somewhere. Right? So your brain is gonna perceive it as danger. And so you're doing everything you can to get away from this. But after your loved one is gone and think quiet down, that same thing that has happened in your brain now drops into your heart. When it drops into your heart, that's what we call the grief. That's where you start experiencing

Erica ([05:14](#)):

Yeah. It's so increasingly painful. You know, the more time the days go by that you haven't talked to your person. Or you know, so it's, it becomes so increasingly painful. It almost feels unbearable when you feel the full weight of it in your heart. That's why you wanna run, run away from it.

Sharon ([05:35](#)):

Yeah. I love that analogy that you said that when daddy was still there, we had some place to put that love. But once he's gone, you, it's true. It's like you're walking around with this gif. <Affirmative> and you have no one to give it to, and you're just carrying this gift. So that is so true. Okay. Switch to the other side. Actively grieving during the death and dying. I am having an experience in my life. My husband is not dead or dying, but he's having a heart, a major heart surgery this week, and he didn't sleep last night. He got up, he couldn't sleep. He's like, did I have I done everything that I needed to do? What if the heart surgery doesn't work out? And so we got up, we had a really great talk this morning. That's part of the talking that you're doing, still not the grieving. I shared with him what an amazing partner he has been for 37 years. I shared with him how honored I was to be on this journey with him. And I shared

with him that I would do this a hundred times over. But you and I both know Erica, if God decides on Wednesday that it's time to call him home, it's gonna be a whole different emotions that are going on the weeks after that.

Erica ([06:46](#)):

Yeah. It all, it would almost be like, you need to play this back <laugh>. Remind yourself what you just said.

Sharon ([06:53](#)):

Thank you. Thank

Sharon ([06:54](#)):

You. Your hearts gonna be like, you should all have a little

Sharon ([06:58](#)):

Sister. I'm

Sharon ([06:59](#)):

Telling you, this is why, cuz you go to those

Sharon ([07:01](#)):

Precious moments and then they kick you in the knee. Thank you sister.

Erica ([07:05](#)):

No, but I'm just saying it's, it's almost like that because you, you feel like you're gonna be so strong and you're gonna be so prepared because you've talked it through and you and him have like, had that amazing connection. And And then, but if something does happen, it'll be like, you, you are, you'll totally forget that you have this Exactly. This capability. That's all it was with Donovan. We had finished the training two days before Donovan died. Our recertification. I was so full with fresh knowledge and a fresh perspective cuz we had a new trainer that we worked with. I was so ready to just tackle the grieving world. Donovan died. It was like I had zero contact with the grief community. Because I just was like, oh my God, what do I do? It was, it was a massive shock to my brain, to my heart, to my whole entire world. There's nothing that can prepare you for that pain. There's nothing, no matter how much you think you're ready.

Sharon ([08:12](#)):

And I would imagine that even the couple days, right afterwards you were like, f that grief work

Erica ([08:19](#)):

I wanted to burn. And I would've

Sharon ([08:21](#)):

Imagine, oh yeah, I would've been mad.

Erica ([08:24](#)):

Yeah. I want, because it's, there's, there's nothing that can prepare you. There's nothing, no matter how, how much you try to let your brain go there and like you said, try to close your eyes and put yourself in the feeling of it. There is not one thing you can do to be ready.

Sharon ([08:42](#)):

Erica. The other thing is, how prepared were we for daddy in March of the year that daddy died? We all sat down as a family and he gave us all of his wishes for his final days. And the funeral. We knew everyone knew what he wanted. Because we wrote it down on a piece of paper. We all knew that we had hospice set up, we had private to private nurse. We were all taking turns being there. We were all spending as much time with them as we could. All of that is intellectual. All of that was serving our brain. And yet still when he died, the grief still happens. My friends. It doesn't matter how much you set up during the death and dying, you are still gonna grieve. There is no one getting alphabet soup without experiencing grief.

Erica ([09:32](#)):

Yeah, that is true. And there there's no amount of, you know, it's busy work. It's, even though you think you're preparing yourself to say the ultimate goodbye, it's just you keeping busy because you're trying to distract yourself from the reality of the situation. And that's what we were all doing. Just okay. We knew it was coming, but it's still, you are never, you're just never prepared to miss someone that much. The longing that your heart does for them, for their physical presence. And I mean, especially for married couples or, or or significant others. You share a bed with someone. Yeah. I I I, I think about my mother-in-law all the time. 63 years of marriage. And then my father-in-law passed away. That was 63 years of sharing space. With that person. Do you think it could ever be ready? Yeah. Even Lewis and I, like I I, when we work with spouses or, or partners, it breaks my heart for them because, and it, it scares me cuz I don't want to have that day. I don't wanna have that day where he's no longer sharing my space.

Sharon ([10:43](#)):

Yeah, yeah.

Erica ([10:45](#)):

You know, it's just, it's, it's, it's obviously heartbreaking.

Sharon ([10:50](#)):

<Laugh> Yeah. Obviously. Yes. Now, when Tony and I had the conversation this morning about just talking about us being together and he went over a lot of intellectual stuff cuz that's what guys do. Right? You know, what are you gonna do with my truck? What are you gonna do? Like giving me all the plans and stuff, which I really love me turning to him and saying, you have been the most amazing friend for me. You and I call that grieving in real time and hear me out on this. You can absolutely have conversation with your loved ones. And we call it grieving in real time. Don't let your loved ones be gone. I wanna leave you guys with a sip. Don't let them be gone and you wished you had said this thing. That's where we do most of our work, is all the things that we never said, especially for a family like ours.

Sharon ([11:37](#)):

One of our, we, we talk about this in another show. Our sister has started saying, I love you at the end of every phone call. <Affirmative>, which I love. I think that is so cool. That's grieving in real time. That's leaving nothing on set. We have to do our part as the person that's running the situation or helping with the situation to do and say everything we can. And I really wanna encourage people when, as much as you can and as often as you can, do your grieving in real time and tell the person how important they are to you and what they feel to you and what what love you have for them. And unfortunately, like in your case with Donovan and Austin, sometimes you don't get a chance to do that. And that's why we wanna do it all the way along

Erica ([12:21](#)):

Our path. <affirmative>. That is true. You know, it, it saddens me when I see, cuz you and I are in a bunch of different grief groups.

Sharon ([12:29](#)):

Yeah.

Erica ([12:30](#)):

When I see, and we have our own, our Facebook group, when people say, you know, do they, do they even know how much I love them? And that is the one thing I never questioned for Donovan and Austin, even though we didn't, you know, I may have missed a day or you know, of saying I love you, but I know I love those boys with my whole heart to the best of my ability. So it, it makes me sad when people question that for themselves because it's like, of course they know that you love them. You were their mom, you were, you're Tony's wife. Like of course he knows and you have these real conversations. Well, I don't know why we do that to ourselves. Why we instantly go to the negative parts. Like you, we will get hung up on the one fight or the, you know, when you said you're just in a bad mood and you're like, oh my God, I should have never been that way.

Erica ([13:17](#)):

I should. He was just so good. All he wanted to do was make me coffee and I snapped at him. You know what I mean? Like, we get hung up on those silly things instead of focusing on how you really have attended to him for all your years of marriage and built a family with him and the ups and downs where you still stay true to each other. You know what I mean? It's like, I wish as, as individuals, we wouldn't beat ourselves up so much and we could just feel confident in I loved him with my whole heart and I, he, you know, I was the best wife for him that I could have been. You know, and then kind of just live in that piece of that. But we don't, we beat ourselves up so much and I, I'm glad that you're having these conversations and I'm glad that we're documenting it in real time so that you'll go back and say, he did know that I loved him until he took hi that last breath and I was the best.

Sharon ([14:12](#)):

Regardless of where you are in the journey, whether you're sitting at the bedside of someone who is dying actively right now, or you've just experienced a loss, our hearts go out to you. Especially now this holiday times, you know, our hearts definitely go out to, you know, that we see, you know, that we hear you and know that we have a Facebook group that's perfect. We're in that Facebook group every day we're answering questions. We would love you to come and be a part of our community where we can continue giving you tips and, and how-tos on the grief. So thank you friends. Thank you friends so much for allowing us in.

Erica ([14:50](#)):

Bye friends. Thank you.